

**WHAT ARE special needs?**

All children develop at different rates and in different ways. But some children are born with special needs. These special needs affect how a child grows and develops. Some children have developmental delays or difficulties right after birth. Other children may have delays a little later.

**RISK FACTORS you can look for**

Some things can put a child at higher risk for special needs. Here are some things to look for:

- The child was born too early.
- The child had a low birth weight.
- The mother took drugs, drank alcohol or smoked when pregnant.
- There is violence in the local area or home.
- The mother and child have poor eating habits.
- Family stress. This could be poor housing, homelessness or death in the family.

**LEARN the early signs**

You can help by learning the early signs. By reading this information, you can know when your child has delays and special needs. You can get your child help when it is first needed.

**SPECIAL NEEDS TIPS****YOUR CHILD'S HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT****Early Identification of Special Needs****DON'T WAIT to get a child help!**

The best time to help a child is from birth to age 3. If you think your child has special needs, ask for help right away. Don't wait until the child starts school. Get help as soon as you can, even if the child is still a baby or very little. That way the child can get the right support. It can make a big difference as a child grows. It may stop more serious problems later on.

**SIGNS OF DELAY**

Children with special needs have differences in the way they develop or act. Some ways of acting may just be a child's personality. Others are cause for concern. Here are some signs to look for:

**General Behavior**

- By 6 months of age, does not like being held or talked to.
- Does not like being soothed and comforted.
- Does not pay attention. Does not stay with a task for as long as other children of the same age do.
- Does not make, or rarely makes, eye contact with others.
- Gets very upset when trying to do simple tasks that most children of the same age can do.
- Often acts out. Seems to be very stubborn and angry.
- Acts extremely shy or withdrawn.
- Does not like being touched.
- Does not like having certain materials or clothing next to their body.
- May often try to harm other children, animals or objects.



## Signs of Delay, General Behavior, Cont.

The child also may:

- Tend to break things a lot.
- Have tantrums, fight, and scream and hit every day.
- Stare into space or rock body.
- Talk to self a lot more than other children do.
- Often bang head on an object, floor or wall.
- Not know when there is danger. May do things like walking into traffic or jumping from high places.
- Be sick often. May have stomach aches and headaches a lot.
- Breathe through the mouth.
- Have sleeping, feeding, eating or toileting problems.
- Be overly active. Does things hastily or is easily distracted.
- Have trouble putting thoughts, actions and movements together.
- Not seek praise from a parent or caregiver.

## Hearing

- By 4 months, does not look where sounds or voices come from.
- Does not react to loud noises.
- Has frequent earaches.
- Has had many ear, nose, or throat infections or allergies.
- Talks in a very loud or very soft voice.
- May not respond when called. May not come even when it is for something interesting.
- Turns body so that the same ear is always turned toward a sound.
- Has difficulty understanding what is said.



## Moving

- Has stiff arms or legs.
- Has floppy or limp body posture.
- Uses one side of the body more than the other.
- Has poor coordination.
- Is clumsier than children of the same age.

## Moving (Cont.)

As a baby:

- At 3 months, still has difficulty holding head up.

At age 1:

- Has difficulty sitting without help.
- Has problems standing up.
- Has trouble reaching for objects.
- Has trouble picking up objects with thumb and index finger.

By age 2:

- Has difficulty kicking a large ball.
- Cannot scribble easily or at all.
- Has trouble building a tower with two or three blocks.

By age 3:

- Does not walk up or down stairs.
- Cannot run without falling.
- Cannot turn pages of a book easily.



By age 4:

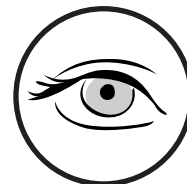
- Has difficulty standing on one foot.
- Has trouble jumping from a bottom step.
- Cannot pedal a tricycle.
- Has trouble catching a large bounced ball.
- Has problems closing a fist or wiggling a thumb.

By age 5:

- Has difficulty skipping and changing each foot.
- Has trouble pumping on a swing.
- Has problems cutting with scissors.

## Seeing

- Seems to have trouble following things or people with eyes.
- Rubs eyes a lot.
- Has red, watery or crusty eyelids.
- Holds head in a strained or unusual way when trying to look at an object.
- Has trouble finding or picking up small things dropped on the floor.
- Has difficulty focusing or making eye contact.
- Closes one eye when trying to look at distant objects.



## Communicating

As a baby:

- By age 6 months, rarely makes sounds like cooing or gurgling.
- Is unusually quiet.

By age 1:

- Does not understand first words, such as *milk*, *bottle* or *bye-bye*.
- Does not say *mama* or *dada*.

By age 2:

- Rarely names family members.
- Does not name common objects.
- Does not speak in two-word phrases.
- Does not point to things or people to show wants or needs.
- Does not shake head *no*.

By age 3:

- Does not know own last name.
- Does not know if they are a girl or boy.
- Does not say common rhymes.
- Cannot follow simple directions.
- Does not speak in three- or four-word sentences.

By age 4:

- Does not tell stories, either real or make-believe.
- Does not ask a lot of questions.
- Does not speak in four- or five-word sentences.
- Has speech that adults cannot understand.



By age 5:

- Does not know own age.
- Cannot answer *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, or *why* questions.
- Cannot use different types of sentences.

## Thinking

By age 1:

- Has a hard time figuring out simple problems. Cannot find something after seeing it hidden.

By age 2:

- Does not identify simple body parts by pointing.
- Cannot match things that are the same.
- Does not know when they see themselves in a mirror.

By age 3:

- Does not understand simple stories and ideas.
- Does not understand simple math and number ideas such as *one*, *more*, or *less*.
- Cannot count 1-2-3.

By age 4:

- Does not give the right answer to questions such as, *What do you do when you are sleepy or hungry?*
- Cannot tell the difference between different shapes or colors.

By age 5:

- Does not understand the ideas of *today*, *tomorrow*, or *yesterday*.

## Playing

As a baby:

- By 3 months, does not coo or smile.

By age 1:

- Does not play games like *peek-a-boo* or *pat-a-cake*.
- Does not wave *bye-bye*.

By age 2:

- Does not imitate parent or caregiver doing every day tasks.
- Does not play at washing dishes, cooking or going to work.

At age 3:

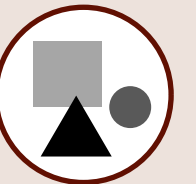
- Tends to play alone more than with other children.
- Does not play purposefully.
- Plays through pushing and hitting.
- Does not play or talk with adults and children outside the family.

By age 4:

- Does not play make-believe games and group games like *hide-and-seek* with other children.

By age 5:

- Does not share and take turns.
- Does not show concern or care when they should.
- Does not show off sometimes.



## **WHERE to find help**

If you think that your child or a child in your care may have special needs, you can get help.

For children from birth to age 3, call the California Department of Developmental Services at 1-800-515-BABY (2229) and select the “Early Start” extension number.

They will tell you places in your local area that can help. This may include a Family Resource Center. There you can also get support.

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## **YOU CAN also:**

- Call the local school district.
- Call the special education program of the county office of education.

They can help you find out if the child qualifies for special needs services. These services are private and do not cost anything. To use these services, parents must sign an agreement to get their child tested. They must agree to have the child get special education.

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## **FOR MORE information, contact:**

California Department of Education

Special Education Division

P.O. Box 944272

Sacramento, CA 94244-2720

Website: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/spbranch/sed/>

For information on children with special needs in child care settings, contact:

Child Care Healthline: 1-800-333-3212

Web site:

<http://www.ucsfchildcarehealth.org/index.htm>



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